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PORTLAND

I have a secret to tell: Portland, Oregon is on fire. Though often overshadowed by its larger coastal neighbors San Francisco and Seattle, the city has a disproportionately influential creative scene. Filmmakers Todd Haynes and Gus Van Sant both live and work here, and a significant smattering of indie rockers—the Decemberists, Stephen Malkmus, the artists formerly known as Sleater-Kinney—choose Portland to return home to after their tours. Why? For one, it's just so damn appealing. Mountains and beaches are both within reach, and the city is green to its core, chock full of parks with an incredible mass transit system.

The typical Portlander values progressive thought and environmental action. Years ago, the city initiated a growth boundary designed to limit sprawl; master urban planners regarded bicycles as a primary mode of transport, which resulted in an extensive network of bike lanes and trails. (Valet parking for bikes? Bike-in-nielys? Look no further.) And over the years, the deeply rooted bike culture has had a noticeable influence on the city's style.

Because of the cool, cloudy climate, biking to work and to play requires some forethought. Bags need to be of the across-the-shoulder variety—a clutch won't cut it. As for the clothes, sundresses with oversized shades or worn-in leather knapsacks (long over vintage three-piece suits float by steadily, as do headbands, hand-knit fingerless gloves, and even a fanny pack here and there. And, of course, the quickest way to get noticed without losing your footing is with an impressive pair of kicks (this is, after all, home of Nike's world headquarters). Somehow, Portlanders manage to integrate fashion-forwardness with outdoorsy functionality—always a tall order.

But with a burgeoning local fashion industry—attracting new arrivals every year thanks to the low cost and high quality of living—dressing well here is easier than ever. Portlanders' proud buy-local mentality extends from shopping in independent boutiques like Seaplane, Usa, and formerly online-only designer outpost Le Train Bleu to wearing hometown labels, like Adam Arnold and Midgear, as often as possible. But perhaps the most important factor is that, in fashion and in life, Portlanders don't take themselves too seriously. After all, isn't that the first rule of style? ERIN RACKELMAN



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